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**RETURN AND OTHER FORMS OF  
IN-MIGRATION IN ARMENIA:  
OVERVIEW OF POLICIES AND  
PRACTICES**

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Centers
ENPI	European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FADF	French Armenian Development Foundation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MIPEX	Migrant Integration Policy Index
MRC	Migration Resource Center
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PIN	People in Need
SEA	State Employment Agency
SMS	State Migration Service
TIA	Targeted Initiative for Armenia
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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## **RATIONALE**

Armenia witnesses large migration flows, mainly outbound, which makes emigration a salient issue in the country. The topic of emigration receives a large share of public attention and concern. The grand narratives of media and political debates are woven around the escalating scale of emigration from the country and the threats of depopulation.

Yet the migration flows in Armenia are not unidirectional. Talking about emigration while overlooking the actual and possible inward flows, provides only a part of the whole picture. Without understanding the motivations and reasons behind in-migration, it is impossible to have a comprehensive solution for mitigating the out-migration, because those two are interrelated processes. The in-migration issues in Armenia receive less policy, programmatic and public attention, despite the fact that Armenia is a receiving country for various groups of people - returning migrants, repatriates, refugees (mainly of Armenian descent) and, on a smaller scale, immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this study is to suggest policy and institutional improvements for migration management in Armenia, with a focus on return and other forms of in-migration. The goal of the study is to review Armenia's migration-related policies and national strategies in order to extract and introduce information on return migration and other forms of in-migration occurring in the country. The scope of the study is limited and does not include issues related to refugees or internally displaced persons. The study is intended for policy makers, researchers and practitioners in the field.

The paper is structured around four parts, each of them concluding with a summary of observations and findings by the author.

**Part I** is an introductory section about the relevance of the return migration management agenda, the definitions and types of return, and the perceptions about the return phenomenon. The section also refers to the international trends of the return migration policies and their common features.

**Part II** helps explain how integrated the migration issues are in the current normative frameworks of Armenia. This section introduces the migration-related legislation and policies in the country, and the share of in-migration in those documents. Among the reviewed documents are the national strategies and the migration-related legal and policy frameworks (national and international), especially those focusing on return migration and other forms of in-migration.

**Part III** introduces the return and reintegration strategies implemented in Armenia and the actors currently involved in the institutionalization of return migration programs in Armenia.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see page 5 for definition of the terms.

**Part IV** suggests policy and institutional improvements that have been used in other countries sharing common migratory trends with Armenia, namely Poland, Estonia and Slovenia. This section is followed by a number of recommendations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out between December 2013 and May 2014. The scope of the work covers information about migration policy framework in Armenia with a larger focus on return and other forms of in-migration.

Firstly, research was conducted based on the relevant literature and official documentation, such as laws, policy documents, regulations, agreements, draft laws and national strategy documents. The data obtained from these sources was supplemented by semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives of government and local and international organizations that deal with migration in Armenia and return migration in particular.

The state institutions approached were the State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Repatriation Department of the Ministry of Diaspora and the Migration Resource Center of the State Employment Agency. Among the international and non-governmental agencies were the International Organization for Migration, European Union (EU) Advisory Group to Armenia, EU's Targeted Initiative for Armenia (Referral Center for Reintegration), Caritas Armenia, People in Need non-governmental organization (NGO), Repat Armenia Foundation and French Armenian Development Foundation.

Fieldwork also included identifying and contacting returning migrants willing to talk about their experiences. Though the sample of the returning migrants is small, their stories supplemented the research data and helped identify gaps and arrive at recommendations.

## **KEY DEFINITIONS**

In this paper, the working definition of "return migrant" refers to Armenian citizens who stayed abroad for a minimum of one year and returned to Armenia in a voluntary, assisted voluntary or compelled manner.

The rest of the terms used in the research are based on the glossary developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2004a) and the European Migration Network (2012) unless otherwise specified.

- **Return migration** - The movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country. This return may or may not be voluntary.
- **Immigration** - A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement.

- **Repatriation** – The definitions of the term are not consistent and have different meanings under different contexts. The meaning of the term “repatriation” in Armenia differs from that used on an international scale, which is limited to “the personal right of a refugee or a prisoner of war to return to his/her country of nationality under specific conditions laid down in various international instruments”. Therefore, given the specific context, the term “repatriation” in our paper means the process of return, settlement and restoration of rights of ethnic Armenians in Armenia, who were born abroad, and who bear a foreign nationality and citizenship (Gevorgyan 2013).
- **Diaspora** - The term refers to the dispersed Armenian communities, which were formed prior to and as a consequence of the genocidal events in the Ottoman Empire in 1915-1922. The usage of the term in the paper complies with the classical notion of diaspora being an ethnic population dispersed from their original homeland, often traumatically, who cling to a collective memory and myth about of the homeland, an idealization of the putative ancestral home, and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity (Brubaker 2005, Cohen 1997, Safran 1991). Armenian Diaspora is considered a classic diaspora, together with the Jewish, Greek and African ones.
- **National** - A person, who, either by birth or naturalization, is a member of a political community, owing allegiance to the community and being entitled to enjoy all its civil and political rights and protection; a member of the State, entitled to all its privileges. A person enjoying a nationality of a given State.
- **Assisted voluntary return** - Logistical and financial support to rejected asylum seekers, trafficked migrants, stranded students, qualified nationals and other migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country who volunteer to return to their countries of origin.
- **Forced return** - The compulsory return of an individual to the country of origin, transit or third country, on the basis of an administrative or judicial act.
- **Deportation** - The act of a State in the exercise of its sovereignty in removing an alien from its territory to a certain place after refusal of admission or termination of permission to remain.
- **Readmission** - Act by a State accepting the re-entry of an individual (own national, third-country national or stateless person), who has been found illegally entering or being present in another State.
- **Irregular migrant** - Someone who, owing to illegal entry or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country. The term applies to migrants who infringe a country’s admission rules and any other person not authorized to remain in the host country (also called clandestine/illegal/undocumented migrant or migrant in an irregular situation).

- **Asylum seeker** - Persons seeking to be admitted into a country as refugees and awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In case of a negative decision, they must leave the country and may be expelled, as may any alien in an irregular situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds.
- **Refugee** - According to the Geneva Convention (1951), a refugee is defined as a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

## **PART I. RETURN: DEFINITIONS AND TRENDS**

Since the beginning of time, people have always strived to discover the world beyond the borders of their settlements. They have been moving from one location to another searching for new opportunities and a better living. In the 20th century, however, geopolitical, economic and technological developments raised the issue of managing international migratory flows of people. Moreover, an interdisciplinary science formed to understand and explain why people migrate and what the consequences are. One of the founders of migration science, E.G. Ravenstein (1885), defined the basic rules of migration, one of them being "*each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current*". Thus he explained that, in order to have a holistic picture about migration, it is equally important to consider the outbound and inbound flows of people. Return is not a secondary stage in the migration process, but an integral part of it, linking previous and future movements.

Return is a complex phenomenon in its nature and definition. Within academia (Cassarino 2004; Ghosh 2000), return was first defined in terms of nostalgia and sense of belonging, a decision of a person to return to his/her native land and live there permanently. Nowadays, globalization changes the meaning of return into a more dynamic link between the destination and home countries. The returns are not necessarily permanent and they leave the possibilities of re-migration open.

In searching for a working definition of "return migration", one is immediately faced with an inconsistency of definitions. The most common definitions applied on the international level describe return as a "*process whereby people return to their country or place of origin after a significant period in another country or region*" (King 2000). IOM (2004b) broadly defines return as an "*act of going back from a country of presence (either transit or destination) to the country of*

*previous transit, or origin*". According to the United Nations (1998), return migrants are "*persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year*".

With no commonly accepted definition of "return migration", there is also no uniform categorization of the return migrants. The most widespread categorization is based on the notions of *voluntary, forced or assisted voluntary return* (Cassarino 2004; King 2000). These notions reflect whether the person's decision to return is made on his/her own will and initiative or it is compelled and obligated. The *voluntary returnees* are people who return of their own free will, without involvement of other parties/organizations; *involuntary or forced returnees* are people who do not return by their own decision and will, rather they are deported or forced to return; and the *assisted voluntary returnees* are people who are financially or logistically assisted by organizations to return and reintegrate. Although these classifications are relevant in explaining the nature of return migration, the characterization of *return* should be left fluid to respond to the dynamics of the emerging types of migrations.

Besides the inconsistency of definitions, the policy developers and practitioners also point out a number of misperceptions about returning migration (Re-Turn Consortium 2012; OECD 2008; Cassarino 2004). For instance, it is believed that return migration is insignificant in global mobility and does not require much attention as it usually occurs naturally, resulting from an individual's personal choice. It is also believed that return migration is less challenging and complex than out-migration, therefore it requires less management and preparation. However, in reality, the global numbers of returnees are considerable and they constitute a majority among all immigrants in their home countries. Return migration is as challenging and relevant as emigration, and it equally requires close preparation and management. A well-organized return may have considerable impact on the development agenda of the origin country. In fact, that is the main factor ensuring the migration-development nexus (Faist *et.al.* 2011; Olesen 2002).

### **INTERNATIONAL RETURN POLICIES IN FOCUS**

Migration policies are country-specific strategies defining the country's relevant migration issues and suggesting an implementation framework for managing migration flows. Sound migration policies should equally address out- and in-migration processes, their scope, drivers and determinants.

Policy makers shifted their focus to return migration at the beginning of the 1990s. Prior to that, return migration had been a rather neglected phenomenon in international migration policies and management. This gap can be explained by the fact that return to the origin country appears to be a natural, regular

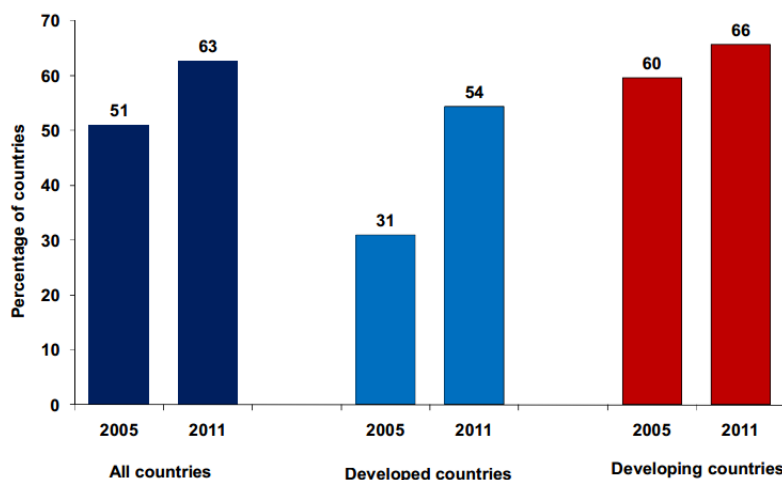


activity not requiring specific attention and facilitation. However, a deeper investigation reveals return as a major component in the migratory flows, a complex process in terms of definition, categorization, impact and management (de Haas 2010; King 2000).

In recent years, policies addressing return of nationals to their origin countries have received greater attention globally. Governments have become interested in re-attracting and retaining their nationals, because return is acknowledged as a potential solution to certain development challenges in the country, such as brain drain, labor force shortage and demographic challenges.

According to the data of the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA 2013), the proportion of countries that instituted policies to encourage the return of their citizens has increased consistently since the mid-1990s, from 43 per cent in 1996 to 51 per cent in 2005, and 63 per cent in 2011. The Governments of developing countries were more likely to have policies to encourage the return of their citizens (66 per cent) than those in developed countries (54 per cent).

Figure 1. Governments with policies to encourage the return of citizens, by level of development, 2005-2011



Source: (UNDESA 2013)

There are two categories of policies that countries apply in response to the return migration of their nationals – reactive and active (Zwania-Rößler and Ivanova 2013). Countries institute reactive policies to address the return flows that have already happened, i.e. these policies are designed to reduce negative outcomes of the return flows during or after their occurrence. On the other hand, active policies are instituted prior to the return flows and are in place to prepare, encourage and sustain the returns. When the country recognizes the link between return migration and development, then the facilitation of return is viewed as a tool to address certain development challenges.

The type and scale of activities covered under return migration policies are very country specific, but there are certain activities that are common among the return policies of various countries. Based on our research on return migration policies throughout the world, the following generalized observations were made:

### **Employment Options and Skills Retention**

Returns will not be favorable for the state or for the returnees if there are no employment options provided to them. This is a sensitive issue for the countries with high levels of unemployment and limited economies, in particular when the return flows are large. If the returnees are not provided with suitable jobs, they may, in time, again consider emigration. With this in mind, effective return policies target not only the returnees and potential returnees, but also stakeholders of the labor market. Active return migration policies facilitate skills evaluation and recognition, training and re-qualification, skills and job matching through returnee and employer interface. Employers are encouraged to employ returned specialists, and for this they are provided with certain incentives.

### **Reintegration**

Social and economic reintegration is an important component in return migration policies, because successful reintegration ensures sustainable return. Economic reintegration includes guidance for better economic performance, entrepreneurship, business planning, financial literacy and self-employment training. Among the tools for social integration are language and professional training, access to education, healthcare and a social life.

### **Awareness Raising and Counseling**

Awareness raising, distribution of information, counseling and publicity are important parts of active return migration policies. The target groups for these activities are large migrant communities abroad, i.e. potential returnees. The migrants are provided with information platforms (face to face meetings, online interaction, call line) where they can get necessary information about the process of return: legal and administrative formalities, opportunities for employment, education, housing, as well as referral contacts of organizations that work with returnees. Effective return migration measures also include collaboration with media outlets to disseminate balanced information about return programs and issues.

### **Institutionalization of Return**

Without a viable institutionalization plan in place, countries will be challenged to facilitate return migration. The institutionalization plan outlines the

administrative and procedural steps of return management, defines the coordinating structure and the institutional and financial resources available to implement the return migration policy.

The above-mentioned points provide an overview of the common types of global return migration policies and the activities they cover. The paper will proceed in reflecting upon the scale of return migration in Armenia and its scope in the national strategy documents and migration regulations.

### **WELCOME HOME: RETURN IN ARMENIA**

Being largely an emigration country, Armenia witnesses a comparatively smaller scale of return and other forms of in-migration. Therefore, obtaining official statistical data, demographic description or situational analysis about the inbound flows in Armenia is a challenging task.

There is no precise and systematic data on return flows to the country. No administrative records are made about these “natural” returns, because when citizens exit Armenia, they do not encounter formalities to re-enter the country. The limited data available almost entirely focuses on the assisted voluntary and forced returnees whose return is organized through the cooperation of Armenian and international agencies (Fleischer 2012). There is a lack of data about (unassisted) voluntary returns, when people return to their homeland on their own initiative and without the intervention of any organization. This lack of data is partially alleviated by several small-scale surveys that contribute to the knowledge of return migration in Armenia (Johansson 2008; Minasyan *et. al.* 2008; ETF and CRRC 2013).

Moreover, in Armenia there is no consistent definition of the term “returnee”, because the return types are increasingly complex due to the country's migration history and the composition of the Armenian communities abroad. There is widespread confusion regarding the terms “returnees”, “refugees” and “repatriates”, often appearing interchangeably in public documents or speech.

According to observations from our research, return migration in Armenia can be categorized as follows:

- Return of migrants in irregular situations (undocumented stay, visa overstay);
- Return of asylum seekers whose claims have been rejected in countries of destination;
- Return of migrants after working and/or studying abroad;
- Return of trafficked persons;
- Return of migrants in conflict/crisis situations in the host country (when migrants terminate their legal stay due to unfavorable and unsafe conditions in the host country).

In analyzing Armenia's policy towards actual and potential returnees, it is important to understand why and when the policy makers shift their interest to return migration. The grounds of this interest are national and international. On the one hand, return migration emerges onto the policy agenda when returns are viewed as a tool to address certain strategic challenges on the national level, such as brain drain, labor force shortage or negative demographic trends. This means that low birth rates, ageing population, emigration of families and educated people gradually shift Armenia's agenda towards the return of highly skilled nationals living abroad and repatriation of Diaspora members. On the other hand, there are international factors that drive Armenia to facilitate return migration. For instance, countries that receive large inflows of migrants apply certain instruments to combat illegal migration in their territories and to alleviate social and economic tensions. Among these tools are bilateral agreements with the home countries, mobility partnerships, assisted voluntary return or compulsory return programs. All these instruments derive from the interest of the destination countries, and do not reflect the migration management agenda of the sending country.

Return flows concern different countries at different levels, but none of them should underestimate its importance. Recognizing the centrality of return in migration management is very important for Armenia. Given the dynamic changes in migration regulations of the host countries, geopolitical developments around the world, as well as the numbers and heterogeneity of its migrant communities abroad, Armenia should ensure strategies for safe, dignified and sustainable return of its nationals.

## **PART II. MIGRATION LEGISLATION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK IN ARMENIA**

This section of the paper introduces the migration-related legislation and policies in Armenia and scans the scope of in-migration in those documents. Firstly, the national strategic documents are reviewed to understand the relevance of the migration issues in Armenia's state-level agenda. Secondly, the country's overall migration-related legal and policy framework (national and international) is reviewed, especially focusing on return migration and other forms of in-migration. The purpose of this review is to understand how integrated the migration issues are in the current normative framework of Armenia.

The reviewed documents were publicly accessible and could be obtained at the official sources of the relevant national or international entities. As the migration related issues are regulated under different laws, agreements, and concept papers in Armenia, the sources of information were also various. Among them, the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Diaspora, the Visa and Passport Department of the Police, the State Migration Service, the European Commission and the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) platform and other sources that are cited. The information obtained from official sources was supplemented with several interviews with government officials and migration experts.

### **NATIONAL STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS**

#### **Government Program for 2014-2017**

The current Government Program was ratified on 19 May, 2014. It defines the main fields of activities and expected outcomes for the years 2014-2017. While the previous Government Program for 2012-2017 (Government Program 2012) lacked a programmatic area for migration management in the country, the new program has some provisions for migration. Under one of the main fields of activities of the Government - Social Policy and Human Capital – there is a subfield for **Demography, Youth, Sports and Regulation of Migration Processes** (Government Program 2014, Article 2.4.6.4). Regulation of migration processes means implementation of measures to align Armenia's legislation to international standards, among them: *"to the approaches and principles applied in the Customs Union, the joint economic zone, and the European Union"*.

The Program includes a noteworthy provision for returning migrants, something that was absent in previous years. The document sets a provision to establish an online portal to provide information for Armenian citizens abroad interested in returning. This portal will provide citizens with necessary information and direct contact to the appropriate governmental bodies.

### **Strategy of the Demographic Policy of Armenia**

The Strategy of the Demographic Policy of Armenia was ratified in 2009. The purpose of the document is to reduce the negative trends of the demographic processes and to facilitate sustainable and positive development (Strategy of the Demographic Policy 2009). According to the document, the demographic developments in Armenia rest on three pillars - fertility, mortality and migratory flows.

Migration-related problems identified in the Strategy Paper are: negative balance of external migrations (the number of people leaving the country exceeds the number of people entering the country), the migration tendencies in both reproductive age and economically active populations, as well as temporary emigrations becoming permanent. According to the document, male-dominated flows of emigration result in disproportional distribution of the Armenian population in terms of age and gender. To address the negative demographic trends, the Strategy Paper highlights the importance of emigration prevention and immigration promotion, along with other issues such as growth of birth rates, improved reproductive health, controlling consequences of population ageing, moderation of disproportional territorial population distribution and other issues.

In order to implement efficient demographic policy, the Paper raises the importance of having a comprehensive picture of the migration processes in the country, the main destination of the migrants, their age-gender composition and migration predispositions. Additionally, the documents suggest—decreasing the migration volumes of reproductive age populations and expanding appropriate policies on immigration promotion.

### **Sustainable Development Program of the Republic of Armenia**

In 2003, the Government of Armenia adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which was later revised and developed into the Sustainable Development Program for 2008-2021 (Sustainable Development Program 2008). The paper provides a strategic framework on the socio-economic development of the country, poverty, inequality, as well as migration challenges.

The document prioritizes the availability of dignified employment as a key factor to prevent emigration from the country. However, it also recognizes that having employment in Armenia is not an adequate precondition for overcoming poverty. The supply-demand discrepancy in the labor market is considered as another cause of emigration. It is articulated in Paragraph 313 of the Paper:

*"One of the major reasons for emigration was and continues to remain the considerable differences of the labor market demand conditions between Armenia and the Russian Federation, which is the major country receiving the labor migrants. The labor migration plays dual role from the standpoint of poverty*

*risks for the migrants and their families. From the short term perspective it has a substantial significance for the poverty reduction – taking into account the still high unemployment rate in Armenia.*

*Nevertheless, in the long term the informal migration contains serious risks for the migrants, which are mostly stemming from unstable employment and lack of the minimal social protection elements. In recent years, serious efforts are made to mitigate the migration, including the labor migration; to provide information and consultative support to emigrants and immigrants more and more increasing in number. Such activities will go on in the future to inform and orient the migrant workers, as well as within the programs aimed at encouraging the immigration.”*

### **National Security Strategy of Armenia**

The current National Security Strategy of Armenia was adopted in 2007 (National Security Strategy 2007). It aims to guarantee state, public, and individual security, sustainable development and the maintenance of the Armenian identity. In a small paragraph, the Strategy recognizes the negative demographic trends as internal threats to Armenia’s national security. From the migration perspective, the document considers irregular and highly skilled workforce migration as threats as well:

*“The Republic of Armenia sees a low national birthrate, disappointing indices of health, mortality, life expectancy and the quality of life, unregulated and illegal migration, especially among the educational, scientific and cultural workforce, as demographic threats to national security.”*

Under the chapter on the External Security Strategy, the document gives greater attention to the Armenia-Diaspora relations, but not within a repatriation context. Rather, the focus is on the preservation of national identity and development of a *“comprehensive concept of Armenia-Diaspora relations, with a broader mobilization of the potential of the Armenian Diaspora”*.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS**

Since 2006, after the United Nations General Assembly held a High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, there has been an increasing international discussion on how migration can trigger the development of the sending and host countries. Yet, migration issues remain inadequately integrated into the main national strategies and development documents of Armenia. The integration of migration issues in the development agenda of Armenia partly depends on whether the focus of the documents remains on tackling emigration through poverty reduction and unemployment, or on a broader vision of a comprehensive management of migratory flows, both outbound and inbound.

The **Sustainable Development Program of Armenia** is presented in the context of economic development, rather than human development, and, likewise, the migration processes are also viewed in the economic context. Indeed, the emigration flows are related to unemployment, poverty and labor demand mismatch, but the paper overemphasizes this relationship. In reality, the reasons behind emigration are not as straightforward. People do not necessarily emigrate because of economic hardships or unemployment, but may do so because of deeper rooted factors, such as social injustice, insecurity, lack of opportunity of personal development, or lack of future prospects (Grigoryan 2014; UNDP 2009).

The **Demographic Policy** and the **National Security Strategy** documents could be more explicit and detailed about the relationship between demographic threats and migration suggesting not only reactive, but preventive measures. For instance, the documents do not refer to the measures for minimizing the social cost of migration on the demographic profiles of rural settings in Armenia or to the effects on the family structures. Similarly, the documents do not suggest any measures for facilitating return migration in order to mitigate the demographic threats in the country.

Regarding the **Government Program for 2014-17**, it does not expose and prioritize the main migration issues in the country. It lacks a comprehensive view on the complex and interrelated issues of migration management in Armenia. Grouped under the same sub-charter with demography, youth and sports issues, the provisions for migration appear fragmented and their prioritization is not grounded.



For instance, the Government's provision for establishing an online portal to provide information to Armenian citizens residing abroad and interested in return, is redundant and does not consider the already existing experiences and resources. Establishment of an online platform for returning migrants would be repetitive, as an online platform ([www.backtoarmenia.com](http://www.backtoarmenia.com)) was successfully established in 2007 through the efforts of the State Migration Service, International Center for Human Development and British Council Armenia. The administration of the platform was later handed over to the State Migration Service, but has not been updated since 2012. The online platform provided useful information on citizenship, military service, education, health and other issues relevant to the potential returnees. It also provided an option to directly contact competent specialists and receive necessary information, a function that is again repetitive of the Government Program's provision.

## **NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

In this sub-section, the national framework of migration-related legislation and policies is introduced.

### **Constitution of Armenia: The Right to Leave and Return**

Perhaps the most basic article that states the right of Armenian citizens and legal residents to leave and return to the country is Article 25 of Chapter 25 on Fundamental Human and Civil Rights and Freedoms of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (1995):

*"Anyone who is legally residing in the Republic of Armenia shall have the right to move freely and choose any place of residence within the territory of the Republic of Armenia.*

*Everyone shall have the right to leave the Republic of Armenia. Every citizen and legal resident of the Republic of Armenia shall have the right to return to the Republic of Armenia."*

On an international level, the Republic of Armenia has signed and ratified a number of fundamental documents, among them the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The Declaration defines the absolute right to leave and return to one's country of origin as *"Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own and to return to his country"* (Article 13/2).

## **Law on Citizenship and Dual Citizenship**

Law on Citizenship: The regulation of citizenship in Armenia (granting, restoration and cessation) is administered by a number of parties, among them the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomatic representations or consular offices of Armenia abroad, Passport and Visa Department of the Police, Administration of the President's Office. The citizenship of a person is determined on the principles of both *Jus Soli* (citizenship by birth) and *Jus Sanguinis* (citizenship by descent), i.e. if a person is born in the territory of Armenia or if a person is born to ethnically Armenian parent(s) (Law on Citizenship 2007).

Dual Citizenship: In 1995 the Armenian Parliament prohibited dual citizenship by Constitution. Instead, a special Armenian "blue passport" was introduced with a ten-year tenure that supplied those members of the Armenian Diaspora who stayed for an extended time in the territory of the Republic of Armenia with economic and legal, but not political rights (Darieva 2011).

The ban was removed and dual citizenship was established in 2007, after the Constitution was amended accordingly and the Parliament adopted revisions to the country's Law on Citizenship. A new article (Article 13<sup>1</sup> on Dual Citizenship) was added to the Law, according to which a dual citizen of the Republic of Armenia is considered a person who is a citizen of the Republic of Armenia and another country (countries). The dual citizen enjoys all the rights foreseen for citizens of the Republic of Armenia, has all the duties and responsibilities of citizens of the Republic of Armenia, except for cases foreseen by international treaties and laws.

The legal regulation of dual citizenship is provided by the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Armenia. Under the Law, a person may be granted Armenian citizenship if he/she is over 18 years old, has permanently and legally resided in the Republic of Armenia during the previous three years, can communicate in Armenian, and is familiar with the country's Constitution.

Without meeting the aforementioned requirements of the terms of residence and knowledge of language, a person may also be granted Armenian citizenship if he/she (1) marries an Armenian citizen or has a child who is an Armenian citizen; (2) one or both of his/her parents had an Armenian citizenship in the past or were born in the territory of the Republic of Armenia and had applied for citizenship of the Republic of Armenia within 3 years from becoming 18 years of age; (3) had renounced his/her Armenian citizenship after 1 January, 1995.

Before 29 November, 2012, without meeting the requirements of the terms of residence and knowledge of language, a person could be granted citizenship if he/she was of Armenian origin, i.e. he/she had Armenian ancestors. However, according to the amendment to the Law on Citizenship (Government Decree 2012), this requirement was substituted with a clause that a person may be granted Armenian citizenship if "*he/she is of Armenian nationality*". This

amendment is arbitrary and does not provide a definition of what having an Armenian nationality means.

To obtain Armenian citizenship, it is required to personally submit the application and the necessary documents defined by the Law, among them passport, birth certificate, marriage certificate (if applicable), as well as any of the following documents to prove the person's Armenian nationality (Government Decree 2007):

- Certificate of baptism provided by a church and confirmed by an Armenian diplomatic or consular office abroad that the person or his/her parents are Armenian.
- A document issued by authorized bodies in the foreign country, validated by apostil or consular office about the person being Armenian;
- A document confirmed by an Armenian diplomatic or consular office abroad that the person is Armenian.
- A document certifying the applicant's parents, grandparents or siblings being Armenian.

According to OSCE's assessment (Kabeleova *et. al.* 2007), the Law on Citizenship of Armenia *"relies heavily on generic criteria - national security, public morality, state interests—that increase the risk of arbitrary interpretation and unequal application"*. The provisions of the Law also raise concerns about the viability of the citizenship obtainment process for applicants from certain countries Armenia does not have diplomatic relations with. In the case of Turkey's Armenians, it is expected that they will have obstacles to prove their identity (absence of ancestors' identity documents, no diplomatic representation).

### **Law on Foreigners and Exit-Entry Regulations**

Armenia does not have a law regulating the entry and exit of its citizens, which is a normative gap in the context of outbound and inbound migrations. The issues of visa and entry and exit regulations in the Republic of Armenia are defined in the Law on Foreigners (1994). The law is implemented by two authorities – the Passports and Visa Department of the Police of Armenia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The visa issuance is carried out either by the Passports and Visa Department of the Police or by the offices of consular missions of the Republic of Armenia abroad. This is stated in the Law on Foreigners, under Article 10: *"The entry visas shall be issued by diplomatic or consular missions of the Republic of Armenia in foreign countries; at the state border of the Republic of Armenia or, if necessary, in the territory of the Republic of Armenia, entry visas shall be issued by a designated state agency with authority in the Republic of Armenia police sector, or a designated state agency with authority in foreign affairs."*

To exit the country and cross internationally recognized borders, Armenian citizens should hold a valid passport and a validation stamp allowing the exit. The exit validation stamp is issued by the local offices of the Passports and Visa Department of the Police. Citizens pay an administrative fee (1000 AMD for a year) to obtain the exit stamp. This regulation imposes restrictions on the rights of movement of Armenian citizens who want to leave the country. After January 2014, this process was partially reformed: those Armenian citizens who hold the new biometric passports do not need to have an exit stamp to travel abroad.<sup>2</sup> However the holders of the (old) national passports still have to obtain the stamp.

### **Concept Paper of State Regulation of Migration in Armenia**

Before 2000, there were no documents regulating migration in Armenia. During 1988-1999, the only laws and regulations related to human flows in and out of the country were related to refugees and displaced people due to the Spitak earthquake and armed conflict around Nagorno Karabakh. The first state-level document on the regulation of migration was the "Concept Paper of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia" adopted by the Government in 2000.

In 2010, the Concept Paper was revised and approved again. One of the 14 priority fields of the state regulation of migration is the **assistance to the return of Armenian nationals from foreign countries and to their reintegration in their home country**. To ensure the implementation of the policy priorities, the "Action Plan for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia in 2012-2016" was issued in 2011. In regard to the abovementioned return and reintegration priority, the following actions were identified:

*"- Further improvement of internet information system supporting the return of the Armenian citizens from foreign countries, which will allow these people to directly communicate electronically with the specialists of relevant state government bodies and get quick and reliable responses to the questions they are interested in, dissemination of information on the systems within the Armenian citizens living abroad.*

*- Running employment programmes and introduction of new ones directed to re-integration of returning Armenian citizens in the labour market.*

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<sup>2</sup> As a step towards the Visa facilitation process within the Eastern Partnership program, the biometric passports have been issued in Armenia since 1 January, 2014. The biometric information includes the digital images of fingerprints and the photo of passport holder. The new passports are valid for 5 years. When the validity term of the old passports expires, new biometric passport will be issued by the Passport and Visa Department of Armenian Police.

- *Organization of consulting services in the institutions working with migrants for the Armenian citizens returning to Armenia, activation of cooperation with the NGOs operating in this sector.*
- *Holding negotiations with hosting countries on supporting the returning citizens in reintegration in Armenia with their support."*

The Action Plan also includes more detailed activities for each Action point, timeframe of implementation, responsible bodies and the expected outcomes.

### **Draft Law on Regulation of Overseas Employment**

In 2001, the State Migration Service (SMS) developed the *Draft Law on Regulation of Overseas Employment*, aiming to regulate the labor migration from Armenia and to enforce a state level protection of the rights of labor migrants. Since then, the Draft Law has been amended several times, taking into account the viewpoints of local specialists and international experts. The document emphasizes prevention of employment through illegal channels and provides a legal basis for labor migrants to be safely and legally employed abroad.

The Draft Law defines priority goals as:

*"Providing legal guarantees directed towards protection of the rights and interests of labor migrants. To ensure achievement of this goal, the companies involved in recruiting labor emigrants should be subject to licensing.*

*Studying the labor markets of the foreign countries. Stipulating legal and organizational activities, which should be carried out by the Armenian Government, as well as the state authorized body in charge of coordinating the organization of labor migration, Armenian diplomatic representations and the embassies with the view of regulating overseas migration, starting from studying the demand and supply in labor markets of foreign countries and conditions for hiring of foreigners and ending with signing international intergovernmental agreements on regulation of overseas employment."*

Despite its importance, the Government of Armenia has not yet adopted the Draft Law on Overseas Employment.

### **Draft Law on Repatriation**

On December 9, 2010, the Government of Armenia approved the *Concept Paper on the Management of the Repatriation Process*. Based on this Concept Paper, in 2011 the Ministry of Diaspora developed the *Draft Law on Repatriation* that is currently pending adoption. The Draft Law defines the principles of the state policy regarding repatriation, the organization and implementation of repatriation, the logistical, legal, financial and economic bases of the process, as well as the integration and provision of incentives to the repatriates. The

document aims to regulate the legal relationships for repatriation. It defines the main directions and priorities of the state policy on repatriation, the responsibilities and authority of the state bodies dealing with repatriation, as well as the legal procedures for gaining the status of a repatriate.

Despite its relevance, there is no progress in the discussion and adoption of the Draft Law.

### **Immigration of Foreign Nationals, Integration and Anti-Discrimination Framework**

The in-migration picture in Armenia would be incomplete without understanding the immigration of foreign nationals in the country. At a smaller scale than emigration, immigration of non-nationals to Armenia is gradually growing. Due to its geographical location, Armenia serves as a transit country where people from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Central Asia or Middle East stop by *en route* to their migration to the West.

According to the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in 2013 immigrants made up 10.6% of Armenia's population (around 317,000 people) (UNDESA 2013). Most of them are labor migrants from CIS countries, as well as from Near and Middle East countries, such as Georgia, Iran, and Syria. It should be mentioned that this statistic does not reflect the real immigration level, as it refers to all foreign populations in Armenia who are not Armenian citizens; refugees, foreign nationals, ethnic Armenian repatriates are all included in the same category. According to the same source, the representation of female immigrants in Armenia is one of the highest in the world at 54.2%.

As Armenia lacks a normative framework for the rights and responsibilities of immigrants in the country, the only applicable legal act is the "Law on Foreigners" adopted in 1994 and revised in 2006. The term "foreigner" in the Law means "any person who is not a citizen of the Republic of Armenia and who is a citizen of another state". The Law ensures the foreign citizens in Armenia "*all rights and freedoms provided for by international law and the legislation of the Republic of Armenia*". Among other provisions, the Law distinguishes between four types of resident status of foreign citizens in the Republic of Armenia - temporary, ordinary, special and exclusive. The temporary residence permit is granted for up to one year with a possibility of a one-year extension. The ordinary residence status is granted for a term of not more than a three-year period, and may be extended.

Immigration and integration policies usually go hand in hand. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2013) is used to review integration policies in Armenia. MIPEX is a reference tool to measure and compare integration policies in different countries using a set of 148 policy indicators. MIPEX reveals whether



migrants in certain countries enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities as the citizens of the given country do. The countries are assessed on a scale ranging from 0 to 100, under seven pillars of integration, namely (1) labor market mobility, (2) family reunion, (3) education, (4) political participation, (5) long term residence, (6) access to nationality, and (7) anti-discrimination.

Armenia's overall index for integration policies is 44 in the 100-point scale. This makes the country's current legal framework less than halfway favorable for integration (similar to Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia). While the indicators for labor market mobility, residence or access to nationality ranges between 40 and 70, the anti-discrimination legislation lags behind (scoring 26 out of 100). There is no comprehensive anti-discrimination law in Armenia that defines or prohibits racial, ethnic, and religious, nationality and other forms of discrimination. It is only Chapter 2 on the Fundamental Human and Civil Rights and Freedoms of the Constitution of Armenia that states: *"Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited."*

However, the most unfavorable integration index of Armenia is in the field of education for the migrant newcomers, scoring only 5 out of 100. The country's legislation does not specify the rights of immigrant children to get an education; regardless of their legal status, the immigrant children should be guaranteed access to education at all levels of school. The assessment says: *"Beyond legal access, Armenia offers hardly any support for immigrant pupils, besides a few programs for foreigners of Armenian descent, national minorities, and children from countries with bilateral agreements on teaching their cultures of origin. The general 'tolerance' course in primary and secondary education does not specifically address the appreciation of immigrants' languages and cultures."*

When trying to find other sources on the immigration and integration of foreign nationals in Armenia, we faced a paucity of such data. There are a few studies that refer to the immigration and integration issues (Aghababyan 2013; Yeganyan 2013) but this data is limited to the refugees in Armenia and the repatriates from Diaspora. It should be noted also, that the terms "integration" and "reintegration" are used interchangeably in different documents, while they, in fact, have different meanings and refer to different groups of people.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS**

Armenia does not have a comprehensive normative framework for all migration issues; therefore migration management in Armenia remains fragmented: different aspects (entry, exit, visa, etc.) are regulated under different laws, agreements and concept papers.

Armenia also lacks a comprehensive in-migration regulation for all groups - returning migrants, foreign immigrants and repatriates - which leaves gaps in the viability of the country's migration management system. The existing policies or regulations do not sufficiently address the scale and diversity of Armenian communities abroad and, thus, prove to be ineffective. With the scale of Diaspora and migrant communities abroad, no document regulates the relations of the Armenian State with the Armenian nationals abroad. Moreover, there is no normative document or action plan to provide assistance to Armenians whose host countries appear to be in crisis areas.

Taking a closer look at the Concept Paper of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia and its Action Plan, there are several concerns. First of all, in the priority section on supporting the return of Armenian nationals from foreign countries and their reintegration in their home country, there is no definition of returning Armenian migrants. Secondly, the document does not specify how the needs of the returnees will be assessed and addressed or what reintegration measures will be taken.

Further, the Concept Paper does not suggest a division of roles or a partnership model among SMS, the Ministry of Diaspora, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGOs and other stakeholders that would coordinate Armenia's return migration programs. Lastly, the Concept Paper does not prioritize the need of developing a separate policy direction to trigger return migration in Armenia.

It is worth mentioning that the normative gap does not apply to the regulation of return migration only. Despite the salience of the repatriation topics in the political and public discourse, the legislative framework for organizing and managing repatriation of Diaspora representatives is pending. The Draft Law on Repatriation includes conceptual inconsistencies and creates confusion. For instance, one of the obvious inconsistencies is the definition of a repatriate throughout the document: a person can be defined as a repatriate if he/she is "an ethnic Armenian who was born abroad, who bears a foreign nationality and citizenship" (Article 2), or if he/she "has been permanently or mostly residing abroad" (Article 9; 1), or if he/she "has been a citizen of Armenia and has adopted a foreign citizenship no less than 15 years ago" (Article 9; 1.3).



A few more observations on the normative gaps: Armenia, having a traditional labor migration profile, does not have a law or document regulating the labor migration of Armenian citizens abroad or protecting their rights and interests. Moreover, there are no mechanisms to advocate for and restore the violated rights of labor migrants when they are abroad or when they are back in Armenia.

There are also no immigration and integration policies in Armenia. Even the most recent and updated document on migration management in the country – the Concept Paper of State Regulation of Migration – does not have provisions for foreign nationals residing in Armenia. The notion of “integration” in the document is limited to the people who have obtained refugee status in Armenia or have been internally displaced from Azerbaijan.

As far as the anti-discrimination regulations are concerned, the Constitution of Armenia contains an anti-discrimination clause, but there are no specific sub-laws or regulations to protect a person against discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, language, religion, or other circumstances of a personal or social nature. This absence implies that a person is not guaranteed adequate protection against discrimination within the national legislative framework of Armenia. While most complaints are addressed through the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia, the Ombudsman's determination is not legally binding. A person can, however, apply to the European Court of Human Rights to protect his/her rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

## **INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

In this sub-section, the migration-related international and multilateral regulations are introduced.

### **Joint Declaration on Mobility Partnership**

The “*Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Armenia*” was signed in October 2011. The document regulates assisted return and readmission between Armenia and ten EU countries (mostly the destination countries for Armenian migrants). The Declaration was signed with Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Sweden. The document supports dialogue and cooperation on migration issues along the following lines: (1) mobility, legal migration and integration; (2) migration and development; (3) fight against immigration and trafficking in

human beings, readmission, security of identity and travel documents, border management; (4) asylum and international protection.

The first program implemented in Armenia in the framework of the Mobility Partnership is "Strengthening Armenia's migration management capacities with a special focus on reintegration activities", with the duration of 3 years. The French Office for Immigration and Reintegration (OFII) manages its implementation.

According to the European Commission's Memo issued on 27 March 2014, the Mobility Partnership continues even if the Association Agreement between Armenia and the EU could not proceed with its initialing, due to Armenia's intention to join the Customs Union (European Commission's Memo 2013).

### **Visa Facilitation Agreement**

On 4 December 2012, the "*Visa Facilitation Agreement between the European Union and Armenia*" was signed (the UK, Ireland and Denmark are not bound by the agreement). The purpose of this Agreement is to make it easier and cheaper for citizens of Armenia, in particular those who travel most, to acquire short-stay visas allowing them to travel to and throughout the EU. For some categories of frequent travelers and under certain conditions, member states are supposed to issue multiple-entry visas with validity from one to up to five years. Holders of diplomatic passports are exempted from the visa obligation. The final stage of the Visa Facilitation process will be visa liberalization, allowing the citizens of Armenia to enter and stay in the Schengen zone for 90 days per period of 180 days.

At present, the Visa Facilitation process provides Armenian citizens with simplified procedures for obtaining short-stay visas in the Schengen zone. Namely, the decision on granting a visa is processed within 10 calendar days, the visa application fee is lower (35 euro, instead of 60 euro), and for certain categories of people it is easier to get an entry permit (journalists, students, academicians, etc.). It is also confirmed that the list of necessary documents to accompany the visa application is reduced; however, each EU member state defines the list of necessary documents for its own embassy or consulate.

In order to achieve visa-free status with the EU, each country needs to meet a number of criteria and make policy and technical progress in several areas. The progress of Armenia and other Eastern Partnership countries towards visa facilitation and liberalization is regularly assessed (Eastern Partnership Visa Liberalisation Index).

Visa Facilitation agreements usually go hand-in-hand with readmission agreements. Both the visa facilitation and the readmission agreements enter into force on the same day.

### **Agreement on Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorization**

On 31 October 2013, the *"Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia on the Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorization"* was signed (the UK, Ireland and Denmark are not bound by the agreement). The Agreement aims to strengthen the cooperation of the parties in order to more effectively combat illegal immigration. The main objective of this agreement is to establish, on the basis of reciprocity, rapid and effective procedures for the identification and safe and orderly return of those persons. The agreement covers both readmission of the nationals of the two parties and of third country nationals or stateless persons.

According to the Decree on the Readmission Implementation Process (2011), the following state institutions are responsible for the execution of readmission in the Republic of Armenia: State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Police, the National Security Service and the diplomatic missions or consular departments of Armenia in the given foreign country.

Both documents - Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements - entered into force on January 1, 2014. On March 19, 2014, the Government of Armenia issued a Decree on Implementation Measures of the EU-Armenia Readmission Agreement.

### **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families**

In September 2013, Armenia joined the *"International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families"*. The Convention was adopted in 1990. Its objective is to protect migrant workers and their families, a particularly vulnerable population, from exploitation and the violation of their human rights. One of the articles of the Convention highlights the importance of orderly return and reintegration. It says that *"States Parties concerned shall co-operate as appropriate in the adoption of measures regarding the orderly return of migrant workers and members of their families to the State of origin when they decide to return or their authorization of residence or employment expires or when they are in the State of employment in an irregular situation."* Regarding migrant workers and members of their families in a regular situation, the Convention states that *"adequate economic conditions for their resettlement should be promoted and their durable social and cultural reintegration should be facilitated in the State of origin."*

## **OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS**

The abovementioned documents are not legally binding. Rather, they are used as regulatory tools to advance migration management in Armenia in terms of issues concerning Armenian migrants residing in the partner EU countries (visa, arrival, stay, return and readmission).

The Mobility Partnership Declaration and the related documents on Visa Facilitation and Readmission should be viewed in the context of EU's external policies on migration, namely the European Commission's Global Approach to Migration. The Mobility Partnership Declarations are instruments to establish partnerships on a number of migration-related issues with ENPI countries. Armenia signed the Mobility Partnership and the related documents in the framework of ENPI's Armenia Country Strategy Paper for 2007-2013. These documents are instruments for Armenia to make advancement towards EU Neighborhood commitments and, in particular, towards visa liberalization

The Mobility Partnership Declaration is "not designed to create legal rights or obligations under international law"; therefore, it is not guaranteed that the agreements defined in the document will be put into force. On the one hand, the implementation of the Declaration agreements depends on the commitment of Armenia to ensure the partnership actions. On the other hand, the European Commission must follow up on the implementation of the agreements during biannual Task Force meetings.

### **PART III. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF RETURN MIGRATION IN ARMENIA**

This section introduces the governmental and non-governmental actors who deal with migration related issues in the country and who are particularly involved in the institutionalization of return migration and reintegration.

#### **GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS**

The main agency that addresses migration related issues in the country is the **State Migration Service** (SMS). In 2005, after the establishment of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia, the former Department for Migration and Refugees was restructured into the State Migration Service as a state agency under the Ministry administration. The mission of SMS is to develop and implement governmental strategies and policies in the field of migration and refugees, including management and coordination of programs by the Government. SMS, however, is not authorized to regulate issues related to border management, visa and residence permits.

The **Ministry of Diaspora** was established in Armenia in 2008. The Ministry's mandate is to develop policies and implement programs to reinforce the relationship between Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora in cultural, educational, professional, scientific, charitable and other fields of cooperation. Among other activities, the Ministry supports the repatriation of Diaspora Armenians.

The **Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs** deals with the visa, passport, and citizenship issues related to the Armenian nationals living abroad. The Ministry issues a Certificate of Return to the Republic of Armenia, a temporary one-way travel document for the return to Armenia from foreign countries. The Certificate of Return is issued to Armenian citizens who have lost their passports and who do not have time to acquire a new one before returning to Armenia.

In 2010, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia and the International Organization for Migration signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of labor migration management. As an outcome of the cooperation, three **Migration Resource Centers** (MRCs) were established within the structure of the **State Employment Agency** (SEA), namely at the local employment offices of Yerevan (Nubarashen district), Ashtarak and Ijevan. The Migration Resource Centers target both the potential and the returning labor migrants. Pre-departure orientation and consultations are provided to the potential migrants about the legal migration options, the labor legislation of the host countries and the dangers of irregular migration. The returning labor migrants receive reintegration support through consultations on the local labor demand and opportunities. The returnees are also referred to training or

professional re-qualification options. The Centers do not provide the migrants with economic support, but act as referral and orientation points.

### **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Armenian Caritas</b>	
<b>Background information</b>	Armenian Caritas was established in Gyumri in 1995. The primary activities of the organization were relief and assistance projects, which later grew into community-based development programs. In 2001, the Yerevan field office of Armenian Caritas was established. The Office soon got involved in the field of migration. Projects for prevention of illegal migration and trafficking, and sustainable reintegration after voluntary return were implemented.
<b>Project description</b>	The Migration and Integration department of Caritas Armenia aims to provide sustainable reintegration measures for returnees to Armenia, and to create an effective, client-oriented information system for potential migrants. Since 2010, Caritas Armenia has implemented a "Migration and Development" program supported by the Government of Lichtenstein and Caritas Austria. The project aims to support the return and reintegration of Armenian citizens to Armenia from EU, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.
<b>Target groups</b>	Potential migrants (youth, the unemployed), Armenian migrants in the EU, returned migrants in Armenia
<b>Activities</b>	Among the support measures provided to the returnees are counseling, legal and psychological support, referral to medical, educational and social support, as well as provision of no-interest loans to start small businesses. The support provided to potential migrants entails information about migration laws in Armenia and the EU and information about dangers and consequences of irregular migration. The communities with high rates of migration are also provided with no-interest loans and grants.
<b>Timeframe</b>	2010 – December 2013

<sup>3</sup> Completed projects are not listed. Only the projects ongoing during the period, when the survey was conducted, are included.

### **French Armenian Development Foundation (FADF)**

<b>Background information</b>	The French Armenian Development Foundation (FADF) was founded in 2004 by Association Armenienne d'Aide Sociale (AAAS) with the purpose of contributing to the sustainable development of Armenia. AAAS was established in 1890 and has always been a major actor of the Armenian community in France.
<b>Project description</b>	Since 2012, FADF implements the project "Return Assistance in Armenia" aiming to promote the voluntary return of Armenian nationals from France and Germany to Armenia. The project is co-funded by the European Return Fund and runs under the cooperation between the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).
<b>Target groups</b>	The project targets both legal and irregular migrants who have been residing in Germany or France for at least 3 months and are willing to return to Armenia - among them, failed asylum seekers, people under deportation orders, refugees, labor migrants.
<b>Activities</b>	The assistance provided to the migrants is coordinated through two offices – AAAS office in Paris and FADF office in Yerevan. The assistance package includes pre-departure service in the host country, hotline to respond to the queries about the organization of return, airport pick-up service, social counseling (on legal, healthcare, education, social service issues), housing search, job placement, vocational training, and assistance in setting up a micro business in Armenia (development of a business plan, evaluation, purchases).
<b>Timeframe</b>	November 2012 – November 2014

### **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

<b>Background information</b>	Armenia has been a member of IOM since 1993. Among other objectives in Armenia, IOM aims to enhance the self-sufficiency and integration of returnees, trafficked victims, refugees, and internally displaced persons.
<b>Project description</b>	IOM implements the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) project. IOM Armenia, in cooperation with IOM offices in the partner countries, organizes the return of Armenian citizens from Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Germany, France, Slovakia, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Based on the interviews with the migrants conducted by the host country

	partners, IOM Armenia develops a reintegration plan that is adjusted to the migrants' needs once they are back in Armenia. At average, AVRР supports 250-300 cases (families) of return per year in Armenia.
<b>Target groups</b>	Armenian citizens who have been staying in the EU legally and illegally for more than a year and are willing to return to Armenia.
<b>Activities</b>	The socio-economic assistance provided to the returnees ranges from pre-departure orientation and consultation, airport pick-up service and medical escorting if necessary, trainings, job placement assistance, and economic support to start a small business or to rent or renovate a house.
<b>Timeframe</b>	2000 – ongoing

### **People in Need (PIN)**

<b>Background information</b>	<p>"People in Need" is a Czech non-governmental organization implementing humanitarian, development and educational programs in the Czech republic and in Eastern European countries. The representative office of "People in Need" in Armenia was established in 2003.</p> <p>The organization has been active in the migration field, implementing projects on reinforcement of migratory flows management in Armenia and prevention of illegal migration for Armenian citizens.</p>
<b>Project description</b>	Currently PIN implements the project "Support of Circular Migration and Re-integration Process in Armenia", partnering with Armenian Relief Society. The project aims to protect the rights of Armenian citizens leaving for work abroad and to contribute to the reintegration and economic stabilization of the returning labor migrants.
<b>Target groups</b>	Potential labor migrants, Armenian migrants residing in EU territory, returned migrants in Armenia who have stayed abroad for a minimum of 6 months



<b>Activities</b>	<p>Migration Resource Centers (MRCs) were established in Armavir, Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik regions, adjacent to the regional centers of the State Employment Agency. MRCs employ advisors and social workers who visit the communities and involve potential beneficiaries. For the potential migrants, MRCs provide pre-departure orientation about legal migration and documentation issues, consultation on the steps necessary for safe migration and contact information in case of emergency. For the returning migrants, the MRCs provide consultations about employment or self-employment options, orientation for vocational training, educational, social and healthcare issues. The project also provides small business grants to the returning migrants. Those individuals who are interested in receiving grants participate in the business plan development training, and afterwards present their own business plan to the selection committee. The criteria for selection are project sustainability, number of new jobs created and level of applicant's own contribution.</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	January 2013 - July 2015

<b>Repat Armenia Foundation</b>	
<b>Background information</b>	<p>Repat Armenia Foundation is a non-governmental organization established in August 2012. Repat Armenia's mission is to inform, initiate and actively champion the return of high-impact (professional, entrepreneurial) individuals and families to Armenia to secure the future development of the country.</p>
<b>Target groups</b>	<p>Diaspora representatives and Armenian citizens who have lived abroad for a considerable time and are willing to return to Armenia on their own initiative</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p>Repat Armenia implements repatriation promotion and integration programs. The promotion activities include sharing the experiences of the recent repatriates with those who consider returning, to encourage and inform the potential returnees about real experiences in Armenia. The integration programs of the Foundation provide employment, business launching and legal assistance to the returnees, creating social networking opportunities for them, organizing language and cultural integration classes, and other activities. One of the key tasks of Repat Armenia is to influence government policies in the field of repatriation, and act as informed advocates to develop a more pro-repatriation environment in Armenia.</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Continuous

<b>Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA)</b>	
<b>Background information</b>	<p>The “Targeted Initiative for Armenia” is a project implemented between the European Union and Armenia within the framework of the Mobility Partnership. The project aims to strengthen Armenia’s migration management capacities, to promote safe and well-prepared migrations, and to build and foster comprehensive return management in Armenia.</p> <p>The lead implementer of the project is the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), with a consortium of partners from 8 European Union member states (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Netherlands, Poland and Romania).</p>
<b>Project description</b>	<p>The project has a special focus on return and reintegration of migrants in Armenia. In addition to the social and economic reintegration component, the project also runs information campaigns to facilitate legal migration and raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration and increase the capacities of competent authorities and civil society to actively support dignified sustainable return and reintegration of Armenian nationals.</p>
<b>Target groups</b>	<p>Potential migrants, Armenian migrants in the EU, returning migrants in Armenia, diaspora, local and international organizations, Armenian central and local authorities.</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p>In March 2014, the Referral Center for Reintegration (RCR) was established at the State Migration Service. The Center functions as a one-stop shop for returning migrants from the EU member states and other geographical locations. To be eligible for the project, migrants should have stayed abroad for a minimum of 6 months and should apply to the RCR within one year after return to Armenia.</p> <p>RCR provides the returnees with information about reintegration options and refers them to relevant services (legal, social, vocational, health, employment, etc.). Assistance in business plan development and small business start-up is provided and Armenian language classes are provided for adults and children. Each returnee is offered an individual support scheme by RCR, but they can also be referred to other reintegration projects.</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	December 2012 – December 2015

## **OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS**

The abovementioned projects support returning migrants and their reintegration; however, most of these projects should be viewed in the context of the EU's agenda in combating irregular migration within its territory. Every year around 500,000 irregular migrants are apprehended in the EU; about 40% of them are sent back to their home country or to the country from which they traveled to the EU. In order to address this issue, the EU member states (with exception of UK and Ireland) agreed on common standards for return and removal. The Return Directive entered into force in 2010. It provides common standards and procedures among member states for organizing the return of illegally staying third-country nationals in their territories. The Directive defines common rules for a broad range of issues such as return decision, voluntary departure, detention, removal, entry ban and other rules.

Most of the projects funded by the EU assist Armenian migrants living in EU territories to return and reintegrate. As such, there is a need to initiate assistance projects for potential and actual Armenian return migrants from Russia and Turkey, destinations that attract the majority of the Armenian labor migrants.

A few observations on the existing support mechanisms. The projects providing support to migrants are highly centralized in the capital, Yerevan, while the migration flows are primarily from the regions of Shirak, Gegharkunik, Tavush, and Lori and the returnees mostly settle back in their places of origin. Taking this into account, there is a need for decentralization of activities supporting migrants.

Based on the individual interviews with the returnees in Armenia carried out during the fieldwork research, it appears that the assistance they receive is often material or covers consumable needs (furniture, heating fees, renovation of a house). Indeed, the organizations provide the returnees with the assistance they request, but often returnees themselves don't know what their priority needs are; thus, the sustainability component of the support is diminished. Priority should be placed on job creation, self-employment, vocational training, education or provision of other tools that will ensure the sustainability of the support.

The assistance projects also need to be more flexible in providing return and reintegration support. The returnees should be given more options to choose from the available support or to change their decisions once they realize that the initial strategy is not efficient for them.

#### **PART IV. COUNTRY CASE STUDIES ON RETURN MIGRATION AND OTHER FORMS OF IN-MIGRATION**

In this section, we introduce international practices that can be applied in the context of Armenia. From the extensive literature on different experiences of countries to regulate and manage in-migration, we have chosen the cases of Poland, Estonia and Slovenia. The countries have been selected based on their common migratory trends with Armenia, which are the following: (a) the migration histories of these countries are largely characterized by emigration; (b) these countries have large diasporas and migrant communities abroad; (c) the countries witness outflows of labor force, young and educated people; (d) the countries make efforts to retain their nationals through return and repatriation strategies.

##### **POLAND**

After accession to the European Union in 2004, Poland faced new migration realities, such as stabilization of emigration flows from the country and intensification of return migration (International Migration Outlook 2012a). In 2007 an **Inter-Ministerial Migration Team** was established in Poland under the chairmanship of the Minister of Interior and Administration and deputy chairmanship of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The Migration Team was established to ensure coordination of migration-related policies and practices executed by the governmental actors.

In 2008, a **Working Group on Return Migration** was established within the Inter-Ministerial Migration Team aiming to improve policies and actions towards potential and actual returns. The Working Group initiated a program based on the presumption that the government should not influence individual migrants' decisions to return, but should provide them with tools for a successful return to Poland. Another approach adopted by the Working Group was that the return migration policy should be decentralized, implemented at all regional levels of the country where the migrants return to their places of origin.

Six policy packages were developed to facilitate return migration covering a range of steps, among them: (1) systematization of services for return migrants, such as an online platform and guidelines for organizing return and settling down; (2) diminishing institutional barriers, among them incentives for investments and business set up, tax abolitions, eased procedures for foreign diploma recognition; (3) actions addressed to special groups such as medical professionals, scientists, researchers, Polish students studying abroad and representatives of 2nd generation of Polish Diaspora; (4) initiatives to support the migration decisions and adaptation process of the families of migrants; (5) actions addressed to public administration, such as training civil servants to work with returning migrants, as well as addressed to NGO representatives; and (6) promotional activities for wider distribution of information.

Based on the policy packages, in 2008 the Government launched the program "Masz Plan na Powrót?" (Do you have a Plan for Return?) to facilitate voluntary return of Polish citizens. The online platform (<http://www.powroty.gov.pl>) and printed materials developed within the program provide procedural advice on formalities prior to and after return, work and economic activities, legal issues, social benefits, health and psychological advice. Additionally, in 2008 the Tax Abolition Act was introduced to avoid double taxation and to reduce unpaid income tax for Poles working abroad in 2002-2007; investment allowances and tax credits were offered to returning migrants.

On the repatriation front, Poland issued a normative document even earlier. **The Repatriation Act**, developed by the Ministry of Interior and Administration to regulate the repatriation process to Poland, has been in place since 2000 (Zwania-Rößler and Ivanova 2013).

The Repatriation Act primarily targets those Poles "who had remained in the East and in particular in the Asian part of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and due to deportations, exile and other ethnically-motivated forms of persecution could not settle in Poland".

The Act defines the procedures for repatriation and granting aid to repatriates. Thus, the precondition for applying for repatriation assistance is the Polish nationality of a person, the Polish nationality of at least one of the person's parents or grandparents or two great grandparents. The person should also be able to demonstrate links to their Polish origin through language, traditions and customs.

Being granted repatriate status and acquiring Polish citizenship entitles a person to get financial aid from the "Aid to Repatriates" target reserve of the State budget. The assistance includes reimbursement of the railway fare to travel to Poland and to transport property, a settlement and maintenance grant equal to twice the average monthly pay, and reimbursement of the costs of education in Poland for the children of repatriates. Under certain conditions, the repatriates may also be entitled to partial reimbursement of costs associated with repairs to their dwelling, or be provided with free Polish language courses and courses to adapt to Polish society.

Additionally, State subsidies are provided to entities (communes) working with repatriates and members of their immediate families. For instance, under certain conditions (e.g. employing a repatriate full time for at least 48 months) the employer may be partially refunded the costs of remuneration, bonuses and social insurance contributions, workstation equipment, and vocational training of the repatriate.

## **ESTONIA**

Estonia has been predominantly an emigration country, but after accession to the European Union in 2004, a considerable number of returning Estonian citizens was recorded (55 percent of all immigrants in 2011) (International Migration Outlook 2012b).

The diaspora and ethnic return migration policy formation in Estonia started in 1992, stemming from humanitarian reasons, as a result of the crisis between Abkhazia and Georgia. The Estonian government, following the recommendation of the Estonian Citizenship and Migration Board, "decided that Estonia had a moral obligation to help ethnic Estonians from Abkhazia who were still left in the centre of the war" (Kulu 2000). Flights were arranged and around 170 Estonians were evacuated from the war zones by November 1992. Though there was no institutional framework in place to support the evacuated Estonians, the local governments took on the responsibility of providing accommodations for the refugees, while many enterprises offered the migrants jobs and the state provided financial support.

This case established a basis for the future development of Estonian return migration policy. An institutional framework was developed to ensure assistance to ethnic Estonians who would come to their homeland from crisis areas. The state entitled them to financial benefits such as a payment equal to the minimum salary for three months after arrival in Estonia, a flat free of charge, and, if necessary, compensation for repairs. The State also provides the returnees with free Estonian language classes. This institutional framework was later developed to provide support to ethnic Estonians arriving to Estonia from elsewhere, not necessarily from crisis areas.

Currently the migration policy in Estonia is developed through the Ministry of Interior and implemented through its **Migration and Border Policy Department**. Regarding migration-related issues, there is inter-ministerial cooperation as well. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign affairs with the Ministry of the Interior develops the visa and residence permit regulations, or the Ministry of Culture regulates the issues of integration.

One of the Estonian institutions relevant in this context is **the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People** (official website: <http://www.meis.ee/tagasiranne-eng>), established by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Culture. The Foundation coordinates activities related to immigration, emigration, and integration. Among others, the Foundation consults and provides assistance to those migrants who wish to return to Estonia.

Return support may be received by a person who is an ethnic Estonian holding Estonian citizenship or an Estonian residence permit and who:

- has emigrated from Estonia at least 10 years prior or was born in a foreign country;

- has returned to Estonia permanently within the last six months and has registered his/her place of residence in the Population Register of the Republic of Estonia;
- has preserved a connection with Estonian culture, respects the Estonian state and its constitutional order;
- is in need of financial support in order to return to Estonia, due to his/her economic and social situation.

A person should apply for return assistance (2000 Euros per adult) no later than 6 months after their return to Estonia.

## **SLOVENIA**

In Slovenia, the issues of return migration and repatriation are regulated by the **Government Office for Slovenians Abroad** (official website: <http://www.uszs.gov.si/en/>). Among the normative documents developed by the Office are the Resolution on Relations with Slovenes Abroad, the Strategy on Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenes abroad, and the Action Plan about cooperation with Slovenian Scientists and other Slovenian world-class experts abroad.

Slovenia applies a joint policy framework to regulate both the return of its nationals from crisis areas and voluntary repatriation. The **Act Regulating Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians Abroad** was issued in 2006. It defines the repatriation process of Slovenians who live in countries where serious economic or political crisis situations have occurred or for Slovenians who are eager to return and contribute to the development of Slovenia.

This Act defines repatriates as Slovenes with Slovenian citizenship or without Slovenian citizenship, but also supports other forms of immigration and returning of Slovene migrants and their descendants. The Act also regulates the procedure of organizing and financing repatriation by the State. If the person does not seek financial support, then other types of reintegration support are offered.

Another noteworthy document, issued in 2011, is the **Action Plan regarding cooperation with Slovenian scientists and other top experts abroad**. Among other measures, the document foresees the creation of conditions for the return of Slovenian scientists, researchers, top experts and graduate students to the Republic of Slovenia. One of the functions of the Government Office for Slovenians Abroad is to make and maintain communication with target group representatives, as well as to ensure that they have improved employment options once they return to Slovenia.



## **POLICY-RELATED AND INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the above analyses, the following recommendations are intended for policy makers and practitioners in the field.

### **Return Management and Policies**

Policies on return migration are not “extra provisions”, but integrated parts of the comprehensive migration management of any country. As the first option, Armenia should develop strategies for voluntary returns, but there should also be regulations for involuntary and enforced returns complying with international human rights protection mechanisms. Scenarios should be foreseen for the effective management of return flows during force majeure situations (e.g. in case the host country of the migrants undergoes war, ethnic conflict or other type of crisis). For all these returnee groups, the policies should contain measures for safe, dignified and sustainable moves, minimizing the possibility that people will decide to leave again.

Armenia should make efforts to agree on common definitions of a “repatriate” and a “returning migrant” to make its statistics and normative documents consistent. Additionally, steps should be taken to improve data collection on both outbound and inbound migration for a better evidence base. For instance, a system could be developed and tested for labor migrants to register their moves prior to departure and upon return. Certain incentives could be provided for the migrants to declare their moves. Improved data is also needed on socio-economic and professional profiling of returnees and their reintegration needs.

### **Return of the Highly Skilled or Smart Immigration**

It is true that the flows of returnees may add to the socio-economic pressure on Armenia, so their settlement and employment needs are not immediately being addressed. However, if understood and managed properly, return migration can add to the country's development efforts. Currently, return migration and repatriation in Armenia mostly occur spontaneously and irregularly. Instead, there should be a plan for organizing the return of targeted groups of people who could stimulate the development of the country. As an option, Armenia could focus on the re-attraction of its highly skilled nationals or promote smart immigration. In this case, the focus is not on the number of retained migrants, but on their professional capacity and potential impact on the development sectors of the country. These measures are viewed as a strategy to respond to the brain drain, to fill in the labor market gap of professionals, to raise labor effectiveness and to bring in innovation. The targets could be the Diaspora representatives, foreign nationals and the locals



who worked or studied abroad and can contribute with their skills. On a policy level, Armenia could have a document regulating the cooperation with Armenian experts, specialists and graduates abroad.

### **Returns to the Communities of Origin**

Migrants from rural areas usually tend to return to their communities of origin, but if they do not find options for self-sustainability there, they may move to larger towns or seek other options outside the country. A long-term and structural solution could be targeting those communities that have larger return flows, and integrating the individual support packages into the community development projects. This option needs further planning and elaboration in order to align the rural community development projects with the needs of returnees, but this could be one of the effective options to enhance localized returns.

### **Temporary Employment Options**

Being mostly an emigration country, Armenia should consider developing temporary migration plans in order to harness more benefits from migration and to gradually encourage more returns. Temporary return migration strategies are a good alternative to permanent return programs, because they provide the established migrant communities with an option to temporarily engage in the economy and society of their home countries. Temporary return migration plans are also an option for 'brain circulation' and retention of human capital. Effective strategies need to be developed to attract labor migrants back to their home countries and to ensure the portability of their skills.

### **Reintegration Assistance**

Reintegration is one of the priority issues that should be reflected in the return migration strategies. Separation, especially in the case of long stays abroad, can be emotionally and psychologically challenging. Even if the migrants return to their origin countries after a successful stay abroad and with savings, they can still find it hard to reintegrate into their home communities. They might also lack the skills to invest their savings in certain businesses. Moreover, being accustomed to certain wages and certain types of work, the returning migrants might struggle to find employment suitable to their expectations. As a result, they might seek options to migrate again.

The existing assistance projects usually view returnees as entrepreneurs and innovators, able to create self-employment options. Yet not all migrants have

entrepreneurial capacity and are not inclined to establish their own small businesses back in Armenia. This means that on an implementation level, the assistance options for returnees should be more flexible. Rather than being offered one solution, the returnees should be given more options to choose from and be supported if they change their decisions after realizing that the initial strategy is not beneficial for them. The reintegration projects should also consider a longer period of assistance, because readjustment is a long process. For instance, a returnee may need a longer time to be able to successfully apply the reintegration assistance, such as when starting a business or utilizing a grant.

Based on observations carried out during the fieldwork, it is recommended that the assistance mechanisms for the returnees, particularly the ones involving financial incentives, be carefully considered. Providing assistance to the returning migrants is not always viewed positively by the local non-migrant communities; therefore, the assistance should be carefully integrated into the overall community development projects, without favoring or ignoring the returnees.

### **Partnerships**

Effective partnership is a key element for successful migration management. The interests and functions of stakeholders should be combined under one umbrella to ensure a sound partnership model and synergies between the government, diaspora agencies, public and private sector, NGOs, as well as individual migrants. For instance, a sound partnership is needed for improved data collection on the motives of return, demographic characteristics, social status, education and professional background of the migrants, as well as reintegration patterns and migrants' levels of satisfaction upon return.

Another option for partnership could be cooperation with educational institutions to integrate migration-related modules in the curricula of their relevant departments. For instance, students in law departments could be trained to protect and advocate for migrants' rights when they are abroad or upon their return.

### **Need for Further Research**

There are several gaps to be addressed in the migration research in Armenia in order to have an evidence base for better policy and program design. The fieldwork observations show that for certain professions there is a mismatch between supply and demand in the Armenian labor market. The best results are achieved when return management is combined with appropriate provisions for employment or self-employment. In this regard, there is a

need for detailed research about the educational and occupational backgrounds of the migrants, and the capacity of the Armenian labor market to retain certain professional groups. There is also a need to understand how the country can harness the skills of actual and potential returnees and what the best options are for Armenia to channel those skills to the development sectors.

In addition, research is needed in certain relevant areas, such as monitoring results of the assistance projects for the returnees, the sustainability and economic impact of returnee businesses, and entrepreneurship. Though there have been a few surveys conducted about the needs of the returnees in Armenia, there is a lack of representative data about the type of support that migrants actually need. There are no studies on how individuals, who do not receive assistance, cope with their return and reintegration issues. A thorough assessment of the needs and opportunities of the returnees residing in certain communities will help in the design and implementation of more responsive and targeted programs that will address local needs and trigger local opportunities.

### **Moving Forward**

In the socio-cultural context of Armenia, the migrant communities and the homeland have historically been viewed as separate autonomous actors existing within distinct borders. However, this is no longer true. With the freer movements and advanced communications of the globalized world, the Armenian populations abroad are no longer static, but dynamic and highly mobile. The parties (governmental, non-governmental, academic) involved in the development of migration policies should consider that the meaning and practices of return to the homeland have undergone significant changes. Returns are less bound to the physical borders and national ideological frames; they are shifting into a new type of interaction. Practitioners dealing with return migration and repatriation issues should consider this shift when developing new policies, programs and services. The interaction with the returnees in Armenia should be transformed into a mutually engaging and beneficial process. The new type of engagement with the returnees should be framed with reciprocity and opportunity for empowerment.

This means that the return and repatriation policies should not be limited to encouraging people to move to Armenia, but should clearly suggest legal provisions, support mechanisms, and options for empowerment and sustainable living in Armenia.

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